

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

AID-05 ACDA-05 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

IGA-02 EB-07 PC-01 OPIC-03 COME-00 A-01 MMO-01 /084 W

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O R 111315Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8261

INFO USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COTONOU 0450

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, EINV, DM, US

SUBJ: FUTURE OF US-BENIN RELATIONS

REF STATE 57761,

SUMMARY: EMBASSY RECOMMENDS AS VIABLE ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS, DEPENDING UPON GPRB ASSURANCES CONCERNING FUTURE TREATMENT OF US REPRESENTATIVES, EITHER: (1) LINKAGE OF REDUCTION OF EMBASSY TO CHARGE LEVEL WITH REFUSAL TO CONSIDER FURTHER BILATERAL AID REQUESTS AND TERMINATION OF SELF-HELP PROGRAM, OR (2) TERMINATION OF AID FINANCING OF THE BRIDGE. WE SEE THE FIRST ACTION AS AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE IF THE GPRB GIVES ASSURANCES WE CONSIDER INADEQUATE, AND SECOND ACTION AS APPROPRIATE IF GPRB GIVES NO ASSURANCES. RISKS OF SECOND COURSE OF ACTION INCLUDE POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECT ON INDEMNIFICATION PROCEEDINGS, POSSIBLE HOSTILE ACTION TOWARD USG PERSONNEL, AND PERHAPS A GPRB-INSTIGATED BREAK IN RELATIONS. REDUCTION TO CHARGE LEVEL (ACTION 1) DOES NOT INCLUDE THESE RISKS, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACTION MIGHT BE RECOMMENDED EVEN IF ASSURANCES ARE NOT RECEIVED SHOULD THE DEPT CONSIDER THAT THE RISKS ENTAILED IN ACTION (2) OUTWEIGH BENEFITS TO BE GAINED.

END SUMMARY

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1. BEFORE GETTING INTO THE SPECIFIC REPLIES TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN REFTEL AND OUR RECOMMENDATIONS, WE WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST TO THE DEPT THAT IN PLANNING COURSES OF ACTION WE DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN TWO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS. THE FIRST WOULD RESULT FROM A GPRB REFUSAL TO PROVIDE ANY SORT OF ASSURANCES RE THE FUTURE TREATMENT OF US REPRESENTATIVES. THE SECOND WOULD ARISE IF THE GPRB MADE AN EFFORT AT PROVIDING WHAT IT MIGHT CONSIDER ADEQUATE ASSURANCES, BUT WHICH WE WOULD NOT. WHILE IN EITHER CASE THE USG MAY CONSIDER ACTION WARRANTED, THE SEVERITY SHOULD BE LESS IN THE LATTER CIRCUMSTANCES THAN IN THE FORMER. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS BELOW PROPOSE APPROPRIATE ACTIONS IN BOTH INSTANCES.

2. WE RECOMMEND COMBINING THE CONTINUATION OF USG REPRESENTATION AT THE CHARGE LEVEL WITH A REFUSAL TO CONSIDER NEW BILATERAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTS FROM GPRB AND THE IMMEDIATE CUT-OFF OF THE AMB'S SELF-HELP PROGRAM. THE LINKAGE OF THESE ELEMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE EMINENTLY CLEAR TO THE GPRB. WHEN WE WOULD OFFICIALLY INFORM THE GPRB THAT THE AMB HAS BEEN WITHDRAWN, WE WOULD NOTE THAT DUE TO THE ABSENCE OF AN AMB, RESULTING FROM THE FAILURE OF THE GPRB TO GIVE ADEQUATE ASSURANCES, THE EMBASSY IS NO LONGER IN A POSITION TO ACCEPT NEW REQUESTS FOR BILATERAL ASSISTANCE. THE EMBASSY PRESENTLY HAS OUTSTANDING DIPLOMATIC NOTES TRANSMITTING REQUESTS FROM THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH FOR SELF-HELP FUNDS FOR SCHOOL AND MATERNITY CENTER CONSTRUCTION. THE EMBASSY WOULD REPLY TO THESE NOTES THAT SINCE THIS IS THE AMB'S SELF-HELP FUND, THE WITHDRAWAL OF OUR AMB FOR THE ABOVE-STATED REASON, TERMINATES THE AVAILABILITY OF SUCH FUNDS UNTIL SUCH A TIME AS A NEW AMB IS NAMED. SIMILAR LANGUAGE WOULD BE USED IN REPLY TO ALL FUTURE REQUESTS FOR SELF-HELP ASSISTANCE. (FYI: REDUCTION OF THE SIZE OF THE EMBASSY STAFF WILL LIMIT OUR ABILITY TO MONITOR EFFECTIVELY THE SELF-HELP PROGRAM, WHICH IS ESSENTIAL.) THIS COURSE OF ACTION WILL MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE GPRB AND PROBABLY CAUSE CONSTERNATION IN THE AFFECTED MINISTRIES (PARTICULARLY EDUCATION AND HEALTH), BUT SHOULD NOT CALL FORTH HARSH GPRB REPRISALS. WITHDRAWAL OF THE AMB COULD RESULT IN GPRB SEIZURE OF RESIDENCE.

3. CONTINUATION OF USG REPRESENTATION AT CHARGE LEVEL AS A
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COURSE OF ACTION SHOULD NOT BE ADOPTED ALONG; IT MUST BE COMBINED WITH OTHER ACTIONS RECOMMENDED ABOVE. MERELY TO REDUCE THE EMBASSY TO CHARGE LEVEL WOULD IN FACT ACCOMPLISH THE GPRB'S APPARENT AIM OF PINGING AMB ENGLE FOR THEM. FURTHERMORE, TAKEN ALONE, THE GPRB WILL PROBABLY MISS THE POINT, AS THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO COUNTRIES BEING REPRESENTED PERMANENTLY AT THE CHARGE LEVEL (GHANA AND EGYPT). THIS OPTION SHOULD BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF HOW THE GPRB VIEWS AMB ENGLE. THE

FORNMINISTER AND OTHER MINISTRY OFFICIALS (ECHOING THE MINISTER) HAVE ACCUSED HIM OF DELIBERATELY CAUSING A DETERIORATION IN US-BENIN RELATIONS. THE GPRB MIGHT VIEW HIS RETURN TO COTONOU AS AN EXPRESSION BY THE USG THAT WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN IMPROVING RELATIONS. SHOULD IT BE DECIDED TO TERMINATE THE BRIDGE PROJECT, AMB ENGLE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE ALLOWED BACK IN BENIN AS THE GPRB WOULD CONSIDER IT HIS DOING.

4. CLEARLY THE TERMINATION OF ACTION ON AID FUNDING OF THE COTONOU BRIDGE IS THE WEAPON WHICH WILL MAKE THE MOST IMPACT ON THE GPRB. IT IS ALSO OBVIOUSLY THE ONE WITH THE MOST SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR MISSION IN BENIN AND FOR THE INDEMNIFICATION ISSUE. IN OUR ESTIMATION THE GPRB STILL REGARDS THE AIDE-MEMOIRE SUBMITTED TO IT BY AMB ENGLE ON FEB 12 AN OPERATIVE DOCUMENT (STATE 34136). THE BENINESE WILL MOST ASSUREDLY LINK CUTTING OF THE PROJECT TO THEIR OBLIGATION TO GO THROUGH WITH INDEMNIFICATION OF TEXACO AND MOBIL. NEVERTHELESS WE STILL HAVE SOME CARDS TO PLAY. FIRST WOULD BE THE THREAT OF INVOKING THE GONZALES AMENDMENT. WE WOULD HAVE TO CAREFULLY SPELL OUT IN A NOTE OR AIDE-MEMOIRE FOR THE GPRB HOW THIS WORKS AND WHAT IT COULD MEAN TO BENINESE DEVELOPMENT PLANS. SECOND WOULD BE THE THREAT OF CUTTING OFF FURTHER FUNDING OF THE PARAKOU-MALANVILLE ROAD AND HAVING MORRISON-KNUDSEN PULL OUT. THE OTHER POSSIBILITY (AND THIS WE ARE NOT SURE WOULD BE LEGALLY FEASIBLE OR PROACTICAL) WOULD BE TO INFORM THE GPRB THAT FAILURE TO MAKE PROGRESS ON INDEMNIFICATION WOULD RESULT IN THE EXCLUSION OF BENIN FROM USE OF AID-PROVIDED FUNDS TO THE ENTENTE COUNCIL (I.E., LIVESTOCK, AFRICAN ENTERPRISE AND FOOD PRODUCTION LOANS). AS POINTED OUT IN THE AIDE-MEMOIRE DELIVERED FEB 12, WE HAVE ALLOWED FUNDING TO GO FORWARD FOR THE ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE AFDB-FINANCED DAM AND REPAIRS TO THE OLD BRIDGE. TERMINATING FINANCING OF THE NEW BRIDGE IN FACT FORCES THE AFDB PROJECT TO BE CUT

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ONLY TO BUILDING THE DAM IF WE ACCEPT THE JUDGMENT OF THE SUPERVISORY ENGINEER (SEE PARA 6 OF COTONOU 40), THAT THE OLD BRIDGE CANNOT BE REFURBISHED UNTIL TRAFFIC CAN BE DIVERTED FROM IT OVER THE NEW BRIDGE.

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ACTION AF-06

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5. TERMINATING THE BRIDGE IS THE ONLY SUGGESTED COURSE OF ACTION WHICH WOULD RESULT IN A HARST GPRB REACTION. ASIDE FROM ITS EFFECT ON INDEMNIFICATION, IT COULD RESULT IN HARASSMENT OF USG PERSONNEL (THOUGH IT IS UNLIKELY THIS WOULD BE EXTENDED IMMEDIATELY TO PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS IN THE BUSH), A "POPULAR DEMONSTRATION" AGAINST THE EMBASSY AND/OR CULTURAL CENTER, NASTIER PRESS ATTACKS, AND THE GPRB MIGHT EVEN GO SO FAR AS TO ORDER US TO CLOSE OUR MISSION IN BENIN. (FYI: THE ONLY PURPOSE THE GPRB SEES IN HAVING EMBASSIES HERE IS A SOURCE OF AID FUNDS.)

6. RE REFTTEL, PARA 2F, AID LOAN FOR COTONOU BRIDGE COULD BE EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED IF BILATERAL RELATIONS DETERIORATE FURTHER AS LONG AS THE US MAINTAINS A DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE IN BENIN. IN FACT, SHOULD THE BRIDGE LOAN BE IMPLEMENTED, WE DO NOT FORSEE A SIGNIFICANT FURTHER DETERIORATION IN OUR RELATIONS.

7. REGARDING OTHER COURSES OF ACTION COVERED IN REFTTEL, COUNTRY TEAM OFFERS FOLLOWING COMMENTS.

8. REFUSAL TO CONSIDER NEW BILATERAL ASSISTANCE (PARA 1B OF REFTTEL): AS NOTED ABOVE, THE COUNTRY TEAM RECOMMENDS USE
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OF THIS COURSE OF ACTION IN COMBINATION WITH OTHERS. USED ALONE THIS WILL HAVE NO IMPACT. SINCE THE BRIDGE/DAM PROJECT WAS SIGNED IN SEPT 74 WE HAVE NOT IN FACT COME FORWARD WITH ANY SUBSTANTIAL BILATERAL ASSISTANCE.

9. WITHDRAWAL OF NONESSENTIAL USG PERSONNEL INCLUDING PEACE CORPS (PARA 1C): WE HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH IDEA OF WITHDRAWING NONESSENTIAL USG PERSONNEL, NOR DO WE BELIEVE THIS WOULD LEAD TO ANY GPRB COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST THE USG OR EVEN BE PARTICULARLY NOTED BY THEM. THE COUNTRY TEAM HOWEVER UNANIMOUSLY AND STRONGLY OPPOSES WITHDRAWAL OF THE PC AS REPRISAL MEASURE. THIS IS A POLITICAL OPTION WHICH WE DO NOT CONSIDER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NATURE OF THE PC MISSION. FURTHER WE FORESEE NO DIFFICULTY FOR PC TO CONTINUE TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN BENIN EVEN IF BILATERAL RELATIONS DETERIORATE FURTHER (PARA 2E OF REFTEL). PULL-OUT OF THE PC WILL PROBABLY NOT HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT ON THE GPRB, EXCEPT PERHAPS ON THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND LOCAL LEVEL AGRICULTURAL OFFICIALS. THE PULL-OUT WOULD BE JUSTIFIED TO THE LOCAL POPULACE BY HAILING IT IN THE GPRB MEDIA (CONTROLLED BY OUR SWORN ENEMY MIN OF INTERIOR, SECURITY AND NATIONAL ORIENTATION MARTIN AZONHIHO) AS A VICTORY OF THE REVOLUTION OVER AGENTS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM. WE CAN FORESEE THE MEDIA REPORTING THAT THE VIGILANCE OF THE MILITANTS THROUGHOUT BENIN HAS TWARTED THESE IMPERIALIST AGENTS FROM CARRYING OUT THEIR NEFARIOUS TASKS AND THEREFORE THE FRUSTRATED USG PULLED THEM OUT. AT THE FIRST INDICATION OF A HARSH GPRB REACTION THAT COULD ENDANGER THE SAFETY OF THE VOLUNTEERS, THE EMBASSY WOULD IMMEDIATELY ORDER THEM OUT OF THE COUNTRY. IN OUR OPINION ANY HARASSMENT OF USG PERSONNEL WOULD BE LIMITED TO OR AT LEAST START IN COTONOU. AT THIS TIME COUNTRY TEAM DOES NOT, HOWEVER, CONSIDER THIS LIKELY. WE WOULD HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO ASSURE THE SAFE EVACUATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS.

10. EMBASSY RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. IF GPRB ASSURANCES ARE FORTHCOMING BUT INADEQUATE, OR DEPT WISHES TO LIMIT THE SEVERITY OF OUR ACTIONS GPRB, OR IF WE PERCEIVE RISK OF WITHDRAWING BRIDGE PROJECT AS OUTWEIGHING THE ADVANTAGES, THEN REDUCTION TO CHARGE LEVEL WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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APPROPRIATE. THIS, OF COURSE, MUST BE LINKED TO TERMINATING SELF-HELP PROGRAM AND REFUSING TO ACCEPT FURTHER REQUESTS FOR BILATERAL ASSISTANCE.

B. IF THE DEPT WISHES TO HAVE TELLING IMPACT ON THE GPRB AND IS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT AN EVEN FURTHER DETERIORATION IN OUR RELATIONS, THEN WE WOULD RECOMMEND TERMINATION OF THE BRIDGE PROJECT. HOWEVER, IF THE GPRB DOES MAKE SOME TYPE OF RESPONSE, ALBEIT INADEQUATE, THIS MEASURE SHOULD NOT BE USED. TWO OF THE EIGHT MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM CONSIDER OPTION (B) INAPPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME EVEN IF THE GPRB DECLINES

TO GIVE REQUESTED ASSURANCES.
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